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## Viewing cable 05PARIS4659, FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER'S JULY 5 VISIT TO

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#05PARIS4659**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">05PARIS4659</a>	<a href="#">2005-07-01 16:55</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Paris</a>

Appears in these articles:  
[http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/documents-wikileaks/article/2011/02/09/wikileaks-les-visiteurs-de-l-ambassade\\_1477418\\_1446239.htm](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/documents-wikileaks/article/2011/02/09/wikileaks-les-visiteurs-de-l-ambassade_1477418_1446239.htm)

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 004659

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER'S JULY 5 VISIT TO  
WASHINGTON: THE EDUCATION OF PHILIPPE DOUSTE-BLAZY

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Alex Wolff for  
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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No Honeymoon Period  
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1. (C) Upon his appointment as foreign minister June 2, much of the French press and many political pundits (fed by, among others, disdainful career diplomats at the MFA) wrote off Philippe Douste-Blazy as a dilettante. His lack of foreign policy experience, it was said, and penchant for currying favor with his superiors would mean his tenure at the Quai d'Orsay would be spent taking orders from President Chirac, Prime Minister de Villepin, and even his junior Minister for European Affairs (and Chirac protégé) Catherine Colonna. As word has filtered down that Douste-Blazy is a "quick study" and is working hard at mastering the issues, his press has improved somewhat. But for most of the French political class, he remains untested in this job and hampered by the image as an ambitious politician chosen for his loyalty to Chirac to replace a capable and appreciated predecessor. Against this backdrop, his meeting with the Secretary July 5 is extremely important to Douste-Blazy since it allows him to portray himself as a serious player on French foreign policy in the eyes of others. He knows that a successful visit to Washington can do much to improve his treasured public image, and thus will be torn between conveying effectively prepared points on a range of subjects and pleasing us in order to demonstrate he can work well with Washington.

2. (C) Douste-Blazy has already had some successful performances in his new job. He certainly counts among

these his brief conversation with the Secretary June 23 on the margins of the G-8 foreign ministers meeting in London, where the joint press statement calling for Syrian compliance with UNSCR 1559 was judged "worthy of a seasoned veteran of the Quai" by one of the Parisian dailies. Within the last week, he participated in a trilateral meeting with his German and Polish counterparts in an effort to establish rapport with the much more experienced Joshka Fischer, and enlist the support of Adam Rotfeld for France's defense of the Common Agricultural Policy. In this context, Washington is only the second bilateral visit following a mandatory first-bow to Berlin.

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Too Soon to Tell  
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13. (C) Despite his strict loyalty to Chirac, Douste-Blazy's course in his political career -- from Mayor of Lourdes in a centrist, pro-Europe party, to supporter of failed center-right presidential candidate Edouard Balladur (against Chirac), to today's Chirac-boosting, anti-Sarkozy Gaullist -- suggests that he shifts loyalties to reap the maximum political benefit for himself. He is universally described as ambitious, with sights set on a future prime ministership. The foreign affairs ministry, many believe, is a way station in Douste-Blazy's quest for higher office. He certainly does not come to the office as the proponent of a particular approach, or with a special focus, such as Barnier's on Europe.

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Our Opportunity to Influence  
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14. (C) His visit to Washington provides an important opportunity to hear directly from us about our goals for U.S.-Europe and U.S.-France cooperation. Douste-Blazy does not necessarily bring to the job the conventional view among some of France's foreign policy elite that France and Europe need to define themselves in distinction from the U.S. Many will want to inculcate him quickly to this view and portray U.S. policies in simplistic caricatures. By inviting him to Washington early in his tenure, we have the opportunity to educate him about our views and the reasons for them. In this regard, it is important that he hear the importance we attach to NATO, not because we are wary of the EU, but because it is the only institution that is truly transatlantic where Europe and North America sit together around the same table to discuss, debate, and formulate common approaches. Douste-Blazy has already bought into the French mantra that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the root of all problems and that the U.S. is prepared to give PM Sharon a free hand to everyone's detriment. The more he understands about our approach, the less likely he'll be to parrot established talking points on general Middle East matters. Coming directly from us, these messages will carry the weight of conviction that they would lack if filtered through some of the career diplomats at the MFA.

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The Issues  
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15. (C) Iran: The French don't know yet what to make of the Iranian presidential elections and their effect on Tehran's policies. Political Director Stanislas de Laboulaye, who is the lead French negotiator within the EU-3 framework and who will accompany Douste-Blazy to Washington, told the DCM that the EU-3 is in a difficult discussion about how to handle the Iran dossier at this time. The French believe it possible, if not likely, that there may be a crisis with Iran looming soon. Laboulaye said he personally saw merit in proposing a generous package to the Iranians before the new government takes office in order to ensure that all responsibility for a breakdown in negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program falls squarely on the Iranians in the eyes of the international community. He acknowledges an equally valid argument (presumably being advocated by the UK) that now was not the time to show any flexibility or generosity since no one knew what the new government's intentions are. (We reinforced the latter argument, adding that anything less would be irresponsible at this point.) Laboulaye said the EU-3 focused in its meeting with Iranian lead negotiator Moussavian this week on the need to avoid a breakdown in the negotiations and on the costs for Iran of any resumption of nuclear enrichment-related activities. Laboulaye is likely to take the lead on this topic, but it will be useful nonetheless for Douste-Blazy to hear authoritatively our position.

(C) Syria/Lebanon: The Elysee retains the lead on this issue, and our cooperation continues to be excellent despite a different analysis of Syrian political dynamics that lead the French to a less forceful policy toward the Bashar al-Asad regime. We should continue the discussion that began with him on the margins of the London G-8 meeting and provide him our assessment of the implications of the June 29 attack across the Blue Line by Hizballah forces. We should continue to keep France committed to early implementation of UNSCR 1559's mandate for disarming Hizballah by underscoring that neither Hizballah, its sponsors, nor the U.S. see this issue as divorced somehow from wider concerns in the region.

(C) Iraq: The MFA spokesman's reaction June 29 to President Bush's speech on Iraq unhelpfully reprised some of the more contentious arguments the French leadership were in the habit of using before the visits to Europe this winter and spring of the Secretary and the President. In telling the press that Iraqis should have "a perspective, a clear horizon of full sovereignty, including in the military and security realm," the MFA spokesman appeared to be reverting to French language on Iraq's imperfect sovereignty that pre-dated the January 30 elections. Douste-Blazy should be reminded of the mutually agreed commitment of our governments to put our differences over Iraq behind us, and be encouraged to carry through with French promises for gendarmes training and material assistance to Iraq.

(C) Bilateral Relations: It might be useful to end the meeting with a brief tutorial (perhaps in a one-on-one) for Douste-Blazy of how to best manage our bilateral relationship. As former Foreign Minister Barnier understood, we have to manage our differences in a spirit of candor and cooperation, not competition or search for advantage. Displaying our differences in the press or resorting to surprise can only aggravate matters. If we get Douste-Blazy's buy-in on this point, he'll have a personal stake in serving as a constructive force in our relationship and tempering the temptations of his masters to score public points. Early tests of this would include urging Douste-Blazy to look carefully at our climate change initiatives in connection with the G-8 Summit. We continue to receive considerable bad press in Europe, and particularly in France, that disregards what we are saying and doing. Douste-Blazy could help modulate France's official public line on U.S. climate policy. More directly, we should lay down a marker on Iraq. The French have told us our differences were in the past and that they share the desire for a stable and viable Iraqi state. The MFA's official reaction to the President's speech is a step backward that we did not appreciate. We would expect a more positive approach in keeping with the recently improved tone in the relationship. We will look to Douste-Blazy to assert himself on this.

STAPLETON